IDW

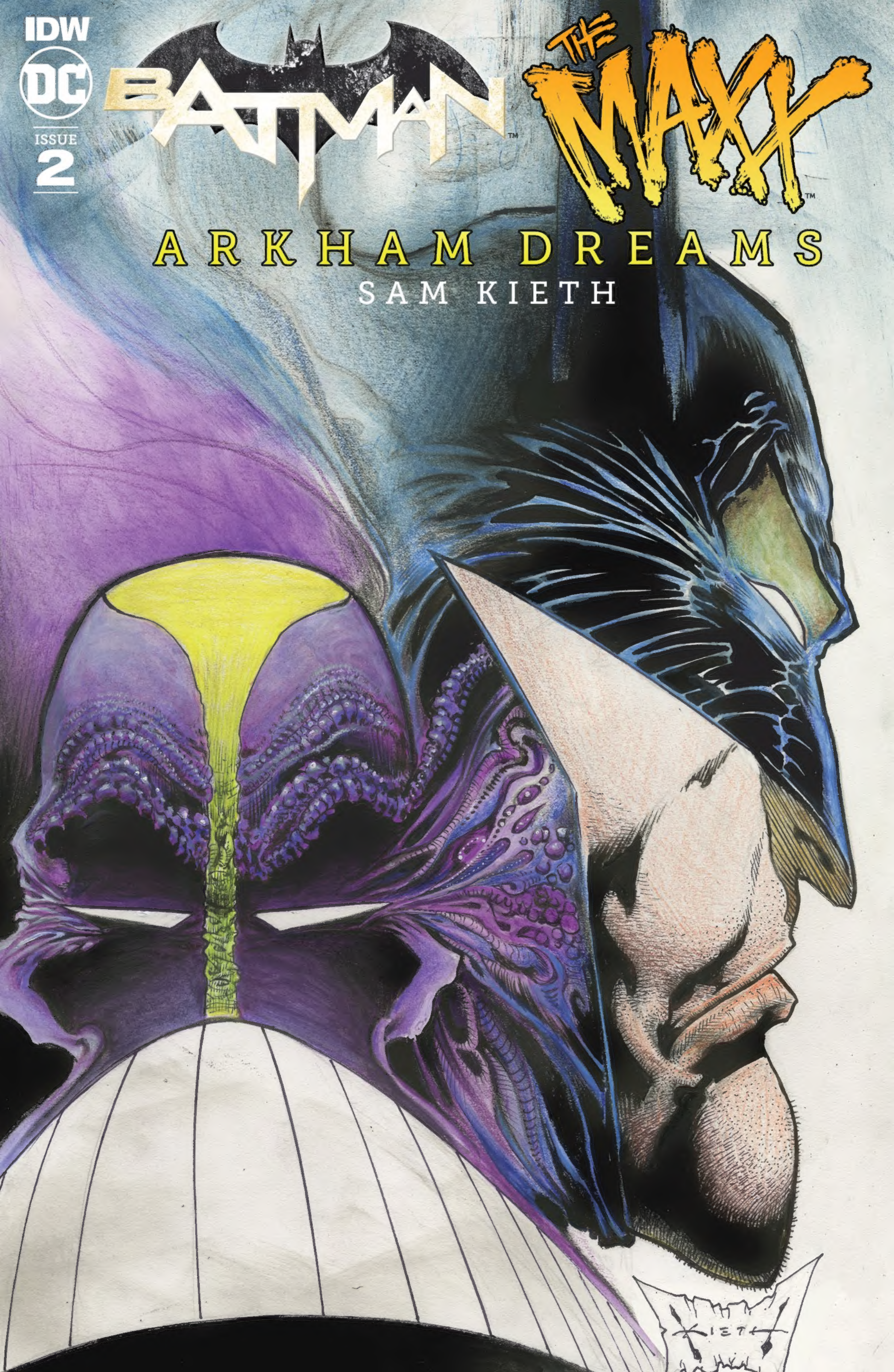
DC

ISSUE 2

BATMAN™ / THE MAXX™

ARKHAM DREAMS

SAM KIETH



BATMAN/THE MAXX
ARKHAM DREAMS

STORY AND ART:
SAM KIETH

COLORIST: **RONDA PATTISON** | LETTERER: **SHAWN LEE**
EDITOR: SCOTT DUNBIER | PUBLISHER: GREG GOLDSTEIN
BATMAN CREATED BY BOB KANE WITH BILL FINGER

Special thanks to Dan DiDio, Jim Lee, Michael McCalister, and Jamie Rich.

For international rights, contact licensing@idwpublishing.com

Facebook: facebook.com/idwpublishing • Twitter: @idwpublishing
YouTube: youtube.com/idwpublishing Tumblr: tumblr.idwpublishing.com
Instagram: instagram.com/idwpublishing

Greg Goldstein, President & Publisher • **John Barber**, Editor-in-Chief • **Robbie Robbins**, EVP/Sr. Art Director • **Cara Morrison**, Chief Financial Officer • **Matthew Ruzicka**, Chief Accounting Officer • **Anita Frazier**, SVP of Sales and Marketing • **David Hedgecock**, Associate Publisher • **Jerry Bennington**, VP of New Product Development • **Lorelei Bunjes**, VP of Digital Services • **Justin Eisinger**, Editorial Director, Graphic Novels and Collections • **Eric Moss**, Sr. Director, Licensing & Business Development

Ted Adams, IDW Founder

Bob Harras, Senior VP – Editor-in-Chief, DC Comics • **Pat McCallum**, Executive Editor, DC Comics • **Dan DiDio**, Publisher • **Jim Lee**, Publisher & Chief Creative Officer • **Amit Desai**, Executive VP – Business & Marketing Strategy, Direct to Consumer & Global Franchise Management • **Bobbie Chase**, VP & Executive Editor, Young Reader & Talent Development • **Mark Chiarello**, Senior VP – Art, Design & Collected Editions • **John Cunningham**, Senior VP – Sales & Trade Marketing • **Briar Darden**, VP – Business Affairs • **Anne DePies**, Senior VP – Business Strategy, Finance & Administration • **Don Falletti**, VP – Manufacturing Operations • **Lawrence Ganem**, VP – Editorial Administration & Talent Relations • **Alison Gill**, Senior VP – Manufacturing & Operations • **Jason Greenberg**, VP – Business Strategy & Finance • **Hank Kanalz**, Senior VP – Editorial Strategy & Administration • **Jay Kogan**, Senior VP – Legal Affairs • **Nick J. Napolitano**, VP – Manufacturing Administration • **Lisette Osterloh**, VP – Digital Marketing & Events • **Eddie Scannell**, VP – Consumer Marketing • **Courtney Simmons**, Senior VP – Publicity & Communications • **Jim (Ski) Sokolowski**, VP – Comic Book Specialty Sales & Trade Marketing • **Nancy Spears**, VP – Mass, Book, Digital Sales & Trade Marketing • **Michele R. Wells**, VP – Content Strategy

BATMAN/THE MAXX: ARKHAM DREAMS #2. OCTOBER 2018. FIRST PRINTING. THE MAXX is ™ & © 2018 Sam Kieth. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. DC LOGO, BATMAN and all related characters and elements © & ™ DC Comics. All Rights Reserved. © 2018 Idea and Design Works, LLC. All Rights Reserved. IDW Publishing, a division of Idea and Design Works, LLC. Editorial offices: 2765 Truxtun Road, San Diego, CA 92106. The IDW logo is registered in the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. Any similarities to persons living or dead are purely coincidental. With the exception of artwork used for review purposes, none of the contents of this publication may be reprinted without the permission of Idea and Design Works, LLC. Printed in Canada. IDW Publishing does not read or accept unsolicited submissions of ideas, stories, or artwork.

OUR MINDS ARE LINKED, BOUND TO THE STRANGER IN A BLUE CAPE. HOW DID WE GET HERE?

SOMETHING ABOUT A MAD SCIENTIST, CRAZY EXPERIMENTS ON VILLAINS IN THE BASEMENT OF A DILAPIDATED ASYLUM. ONE I MANAGED TO ESCAPE FROM...

...THE JUNGLE QUEEN'S VOICE POUNDING IN MY BRAIN, CALLING ME BACK FROM THIS NIGHTMARE, HER SAFE VOICE, HER SOOTHING EYES, BECKONING ME ONWARDS...

...FOR I AM *THE MAXX*...

...AND THE OUTBACK'S MADNESS IS WHAT I CALL HOME.

CONFUSED AGAIN. WHERE WAS I BEFORE?

SOMETHING... ITCHING ON THE BACK OF MY HEAD.

WAIT, I REMEMBER... THE OUTBACK. SWALLOWED BY THE DEADLY AIR-BLOW-FISH.

I USED MY CLAWS TO ESCAPE...

SLICE

RIP

...BUT *THE BATMAN* USED SOMETHING ELSE.

IT'S A BOOMERANG, BUT IT ALSO CUTS.

WAIT—THE BLOWFISH HAS CHANGED! I REMEMBER THIS GUY'S FACE FROM SOMEWHERE...

ARKHAM ASYLUM.

WHAT THE HELL HAVE YOU DONE TO HIM?

CONTROLLED ELECTRICAL SNAPS ARE STIMULATING HIS BRAIN, INVERTING HIS PSYCHE—UNFORTUNATELY IT DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE VERY... COMFORTABLE FOR HIM.

STOP IT. LOATHSOME AS THE PENGUIN IS, HE DOESN'T DESERVE THIS.

YOU DON'T THINK—

AAAARRGGHH!!

NOOOO!

ENOUGH! MUST BREAK *FREE*—MUST *ESCAPE* THIS WORLD!

MAXX, WAIT! RIPPING OUT THOSE ELECTRODES COULD CAUSE PERMANENT DAMAGE.

THIS ISN'T THE OUTBACK I KNOW. THE JUNGLE QUEEN WOULD NEVER—THIS IS ALL WRONG, *ALL WRONG!*

DISPARU, I'M CALLING SECURITY— *NOW!*

ARE YOU INSANE? THESE EXPERIMENTS HAVE GONE OFF THE RAILS!

CALM DOWN. THERE'S A SENSOR PLUGGED IN TO TRACK HIM, AND HE'S STILL LINKED INTO THE OUTBACK, SO NO MATTER WHERE HE GOES, THERE'S NO...

SECURITY'S A SKELETON OF ITS FORMER SELF AFTER HOURS— BUDGETARY CUTS, SADLY.

"...ESCAPE."

"SO WHERE ARE WE NOW?"

"TRAILING BEHIND AN AIR WHALE."

"NO, I MEAN WHAT'S THIS CRAZY JUMPING CREATURE WE'RE TRYING TO HANG ONTO?"

"THIS IS THE DREADED PLOP N' POP. THEY CAN ONLY BE SUBDUED BY FORCEFUL, PROLONGED PHYSICAL CONTACT.

"EITHER THAT, OR A HUG."

"I TAKE IT THIS ONE DOESN'T WANT A HUG?"

PLOP PLOP

PLOP

PLOP

PLOP

"OBVIOUSLY NOT."

WHY DON'T WE JUST LEAVE IT ALONE?

BECAUSE IT DEMANDS PHYSICAL CONTACT. OTHERWISE IT'D RIP OUR SPINES OUT AND EAT OUR ENTRAILS.

TALK ABOUT NEEDY. WHY IS IT CALLED PLOP N' POP?

PLOP!

POP

STUPID QUESTION.

EACH PERSON'S OUTBACK CONTAINS CLUES THAT ONLY THEY CAN BEGIN TO FATHOM.

TROUBLE IS, WE DON'T KNOW WHOSE OUTBACK THIS IS... YET.

THE PENGUIN'S?

MAYBE AT FIRST, BUT NOT ANYMORE.

ARRRRGH— I'M BEING SUCKED INTO SOME KIND OF VORTEX... CAN'T BREATHE...

IT'S THE *GALL-GALOOP-EEE DIMENSION.*

HERE, I'LL PULL YOU OUT—

AAAAARRGGGGAH

OOPS. TOO LATE.

DON'T WORRY, GALL-GALOOP-EEE DIMENSIONS USUALLY EXIT SOMEWHERE ELSE IN THIS OUTBACK. LEAST I THINK THEY DO...

BLIP

BACK AT ARKHAM...

SO, THIS MUST BE THE INFAMOUS *JOKER*.

BRILLIANT DEDUCTION, BALDY.

UECK

SQUECK

SQUECK

I SAW THEM DUMP PENGUIN BACK INTO HIS CELL IN A WHEELBARROW AFTER YOU WERE THROUGH WITH HIM.

DO YOUR BEST, SHRIMP, BETTER MEN THAN YOU HAVE ***TRIED*** TO BREAK THE CLOWN PRINCE OF CRIME.

YOU'RE ACTUALLY DOING ME A FAVOR. YOU'RE NOT FORCING ME ANYWHERE I HAVEN'T ALREADY EXPLORED.

WHALES SWIMMING THROUGH THE AIR?

A GIANT SLUG?

HOOLY, ANYONE?

CRABBIT GOT YOUR TONGUE, DOCTOR...

...OR DOES SOMEONE JUST NEED...

"...A LITTLE HUG?"

MAXX!

MAXX...?

I COULD BE MILES AWAY, OR IN ANYONE'S OUTBACK BY NOW.

NO AIR WHALE YET.

THAT ODD CREATURE WITH THE SLEDGE HAMMER SEEMS HARMLESS ENOUGH.

SERIOUSLY? THIS IS THE BEST SLEUTHING YOU CAN MUSTER?

JOKER!

IT'S SO NICE AND PEACEFUL HERE, ISN'T IT, BAT-BREATH? BUT APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEIVING.

AND, TO READ YOUR THOUGHTS; NO, RET' QARK'N'S ONE-TON CLUB IS THE OPPOSITE OF HARMLESS.

AS YOUR NEW PAL IN THE PURPLE PAJAMAS CAN ATTEST TO. JUST ASK HIM.

SO DISPARU HAS YOU WIRED UP INTO THIS NIGHTMARISH WORLD, TOO?

OH, I'VE GOT A HEAD START; BEEN TRAVELING HERE FOR YEARS NOW, LONG BEFORE THAT WITCH DOCTOR NOSED IN...

OH, IT'S NOT ALL NIGHTMARES. SOME OF IT'S A REAL YUK, A JOKER'S FLUSH, YOU MIGHT SAY.

...ALL THANKS TO WHAT ANOTHER MYSTERIOUS BAD-BOY-IN-A-BLUE CAPE DID, WITH HIS LOOONG SKINNY HEAD!

HE'S DIALED INTO THIS OUTBACK FREAK SHOW IN WAYS THE REST OF US HAVE NEVER DREAMED. BUT I'M SURE YOUR PURPLE PAJAMA PAL CAN TELL YOU ALL ABOUT HIM.

HIS NAME IS—

I...

DON'T...

...CARE!

WOW, SOMEBODY'S CRANKY.

GUESS POPPING IN AND OUT OF PORTALS HAS SOMEBODY'S GRAY UNDIES ALL IN A BUNCH.

TRY COUNTING TO 10...

...TO PURGE ANY NEGATIVE FEELINGS THAT MAY HAVE BEEN BUILDING UP, 'KAY?

...OTHERWISE, YOU MAY JUST, COME...

...UNDONE!

TURN CRAZY AS A *LOON*.

BATTY AS A BED-BUG.

OR AM I BELABORING THE... *JOKE?*

I CAN FEEL HER HAIR.

SENSE HER PENETRATING GAZE.

MAXX...?

ALMOST HEAR HER VOICE. IN ONE MOMENT, SHE'S JULIE WINTERS.

IT'S SEEMS LIKE AGES SINCE WE LOST CONTACT. HAS IT BEEN... YEARS? DECADES?

I'VE SOUGHT HER ON THE STREETS, IN BACK ALLEYS, SHELTERS, BUT I COULD NEVER TRACK HER DOWN. HER OLD ADDRESS, ABANDONED.

THAT NEW PHONE SHE GAVE ME SEEMED HARMLESS ENOUGH. SHE PROMISED EVERYONE ELSE HAS ONE, ALL THE "THUMB PEOPLE" DO, BUT I... COULD NEVER MAKE IT WORK. WORLD KEEPS PASSING ME BY.

I'VE LET HER DOWN. AGAIN. BUT THAT'S JUST IN ONE WORLD: JULIE'S WORLD.

IN THE OUTBACK, THERE'S STILL HOPE. THERE—IT'S THE WOUNDED QUEEN'S GAZE THAT HAUNTS MY SOUL.

THE JUNGLE QUEEN WHOSE DAMAGED OUTBACK I SEEK TO HEAL, I VOW TO PROTECT, FIGHT TO SAVE.

BUT FIRST, I MUST...

...FIND HER.

HOLD THAT PUNCH, BAT-BRAIN. HERE COMES YOUR PAL IN THE PURPLE PJ'S AGAIN.

KINDA PATHETIC THAT HE HADN'T FOUND US EARLIER, GIVEN HE WASTES SO MUCH OF HIS OWN TIME IN THIS ABORIGINAL FANTASY LAND... OR IS IT ALL IN HIS, AND OUR, HEADS...?

JOKER HAS A POINT: HOW DO WE KNOW IF ANY OF THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING?

HEY, I HEARD THAT.

YOU'RE CAUSING DAMAGE IN WHATEVER DELUSIONAL WORLDS YOU INHABIT.

HEY, I HEARD THAT.

IT'S WORSE THAN THAT—I COULD BE KILLING YOU IN ARKHAM'S BASEMENT RIGHT NOW...

...OR DISTRACTING YOU WITH ALL THIS IN ORDER TO POISON AND KILL THE PRECIOUS JUNGLE QUEEN WHO'S SO PIVOTAL TO THE OUTBACK'S HEALTH.

MARK MY WORDS... NO ONE'S HARMING THE JUNGLE QUEEN, YOU GREEN MEANIE...

...FOR I AM...

...

THE WRATH

MEEP.

ARRG

QUICKLY! HE MUST BE GOING INTO CARDIAC—

NO, YOU FOOL, IT WORKED!

GOADING THAT PURPLE PITBULL INTO STABBING ME LEFT A PSYCHIC TRAIL IN THE OUTBACK, ONE LEADING BACK HERE TO OUR WORLD.

THE JUNGLE QUEEN'S REAL-WORLD COUNTERPART IS RIGHT HERE IN GOTHAM... "JULIE" SOMETHING...

WINTERS. *JULIE WINTERS*. SO HYSTERICAL; THAT'S HIS WEAKNESS.

THANKS TO MAXX'S BLUNDER, I'LL SOON SPREAD A TOXIC TRAIL OVER THE WHOLE CITY.

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

IT'S SO FUNNY I COULD *DIE*.

BUT WAIT—

LATER, DOC. I MUST FIND OUR LITTLE MISS WINTERS.

SNAP

SNAP

WHUMP

"SO TELL ME, MAXX, HOW DID YOU FIND ME AFTER I GOT SUCKED INTO THAT DIMENSIONAL WORMHOLE?"

"OUTBACK HOLES USUALLY REOPEN. JUST WAITED A FEW MINUTES, THEN JUMPED IN AND SAW YOU BEATING UP THE SKINNY GREEN ELF."

"HE'S MORE THAN AN ELF. LISTEN, MAXX, WHEN I FIRST CAME INTO THE OUTBACK, YOU AND I FOUND A JUNGLE QUEEN WHO SPOKE OF A SICKNESS IN THIS LAND. JOKER SEEMS TO KNOW ABOUT HER TOO... WHAT ROLE DOES SHE PLAY?"

"THE QUEEN IS LIKE THE AIR WHALES, OR THE SOIL ITSELF. ONCE POISONED, IT CAN SPREAD THROUGH THE LAND LIKE A CANCER. LOOK AROUND, THIS LAND HAS SUFFERED SUCH A LOSS."

"BUT IN OUR WORLD, THERE'S A COUNTERPART TO THIS SUFFERING, RIGHT? DISPARU. THE VILLAINS IN THE BASEMENT?"

"THE OTHER WORLDS ARE LIKE A DREAM, ONCE I'M THERE. EACH ONE HAS ITS OWN RULES, OWN CREATURES."

"WELL, THAT DEADLY GREEN ELF MEANS TO HURT YOUR QUEEN, MAXX...

"...AND I'M AFRAID THAT STABBING HIM THROUGH THE CHEST WON'T STOP HIM."

"I KINDA FIGURED. BUT WE MUST PROTECT THE QUEEN FROM THE POISON...

"...IN BOTH WORLDS."

MAXX, THERE HE IS AGAIN—THE JOKER!

MAXX? WAIT—WHERE ARE YOU?

SKINNY GREEN ELF? WHAT A CHARMING LITTLE WORLD OF MAKE-BELIEVE YOUR PICKLED PAJAMA PAL HAS. *WOW*, THAT'S AN ALLITERATIVE TONGUE TWISTER.

NOTICE MY HANDIWORK YET, BATBOY?

IN THIS WORLD IT'S JUST A TOXIC GREEN BLOB FEEDING OFF THIS POOR LITTLE WHALE'S FIN.

BUT IN THE REAL WORLD?

LIKE MAXX SAID, EACH WORLD HAS ITS OWN RULES, ITS OWN THREATS. LOOK AGAIN, BATMAN, LOOK PAST THE ILLUSIONS.

IF THIS ISN'T REALLY A WHALE, THEN WHAT GREEN METAL CAPSULES THREATEN THE WHOLE CITY OF GOTHAM, *EH?*

TIME TO SWITCH REALITIES AGAIN.

LITTLE KNOWN OUTBACK FACTS.

CRABBIT DROPPINGS ARE OFTEN USED BY INVISIBLE RAMORA FISH, ALLOWING THEM TO CLING TO THE AIR WHALE'S UNDERBELLY UNNOTICED.

LET'S TRY A FEW DOWN ON MY FEET.

GREAT! IT WORKS.

THIS BLIMP IS ARMED WITH BOMBS?

TOXIC GAS, READY TO ENVELOP THE WHOLE SLEEPING CITY.

OR WILL IT TURN INTO A RAINBOW OF COTTON CANDY? ANYTHING CAN HAPPEN IN THIS TOPSY-TURVY REALM!

OKAY—I CAN WALK UPSIDE DOWN NOW, SO EITHER I'M AS INVISIBLE AS A RAMORA FISH, OR NOBODY CARES I'M HERE.

TRUE, I COULD STILL BE IN ARKHAM'S DECREPIT DUNGEON RIGHT NOW...

...BUT IS POISON GAS, POSSIBLY KILLING THOUSANDS, WORTH THAT RISK?

CALL MY BLUFF, THEN. GO ON—I ***DARE*** YOU.

WHOA! THE WIND'S POWERFUL UP HERE... I'VE SLID BACK AWAY FROM THEM AGAIN.

OR MAYBE IT'S THE WHALE WHO'S SLIPPERY. CRAB DUNG ON RAMORA FINS MAY BE OVERRATED.

JOKER, I'M CALLING YOUR SICK BLUFF.

EXCELLENT— YOU'RE AS EASY TO BAIT AS YOUR PAL MAXX!

REAL WORLD.

TOXIC GAS, HERE WE COME.

JUST GOTTA GRAB THE LEVER.

OUTBACK.

THIS AIR WHALE HAS A GROWTH ON ITS FIN, AND IT'S THREATENING TO POLLUTE THE WHOLE OUTBACK.

MUST CRAWL BACK DOWN THERE AGAIN.

JOKER, YOU FOOL, COME HERE.

HEY, NOW, WHAT FUN WOULD THAT BE?

OUTBACK.

CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT CUT

SORRY, MY AIR-WHALE FRIEND, I MUST CUT YOUR FIN FREE TO SAVE THE OUTBACK.

JOKER— COME HERE!

REAL WORLD.

RIP

OH, GREAT, YOUR MAROON MORON FRIEND IS CUTTING US BOTH LOOSE NOW.

THOSE GAS CANISTERS FALLING IN THE BAY IS BETTER THAN THEM EXPLODING OVER THE CITY.

I'VE WOUNDED MY POOR FRIEND, THE AIR WHALE, BUT THE TOXIN HAS FALLEN AWAY.

RIP

OH, LUCKY ME—YOU KNOW I CAN'T SWIM, RIGHT? KIDDING.

DON'T YOU EVER SHUT UP?

BOMB

MAXX

SPLASH

BATS

JOKER

SPLASH

SPLASH

IT'S REALLY *YOU.*

SO, MY OLD FRIEND, WE MEET AGAIN AT LAST.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD. IF THERE'S A REASON THE OUTBACK'S DYING, IT'S GOTTA BE *YOU*.

UNTIL YOU CAN BE SURE WHOSE OUTBACK IT ACTUALLY IS, BE CAREFUL WHOM YOU BLAME. THERE'S MORE AT STAKE HERE THAN A SINGLE OUTBACK, MAXX.

THE AILING QUEEN YOU ENCOUNTERED IN HER FORTRESS MAY HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH JULIE WINTERS. THERE ARE ENDLESS STRANGERS LOST IN A MYRIAD OF OUTBACKS... ALL OVER THE WORLD.

YOU'RE USELESS HERE, AND YOUR ACCUSING ME IS YET ANOTHER BLIND ALLEY. WASTE OF TIME. DEAD END. FIND JULIE. SHE ALONE CAN HELP YOU—

BUT I *CAN'T*... SHE'S GONE, I CAN'T FIND HER ANYMORE. HOW DO I KNOW THIS ISN'T ANOTHER OF YOUR TRICKS?

YOU'RE DOOMED TO REMAIN LOST UNTIL YOU RETURN TO THE SOURCE.

THE OUTBACK'S SUFFERING IS A SYMPTOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL'S DEEPER PSYCHIC WOUND.

MY HEAD IS POUNDING, MUST ESCAPE.

NO, MAXX. FOR ONCE, IGNORE THE OUTBACK.

FOLLOW THE FORGOTTEN MEMORIES DEEP WITHIN YOURSELF, TOO...

"...YOUR JUNGLE QUEEN'S INNER VOICE."

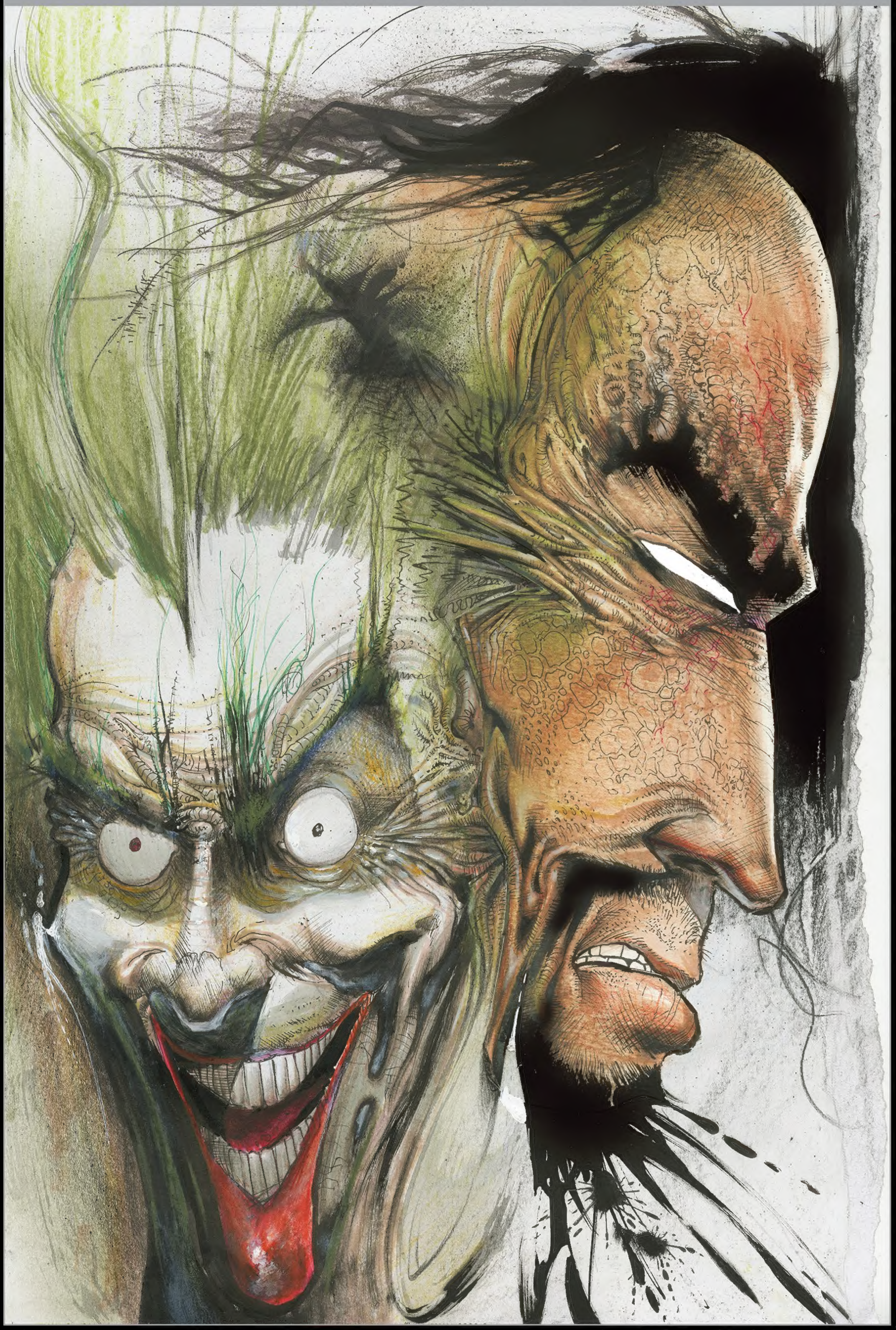
JULIE!

WELL, I WAS WONDERING WHEN YOU'D SHOW UP.

TO BE CONTINUED!

COVER A BY SAM KIETH

COVER B BY SAM KIETH



RETAILER INCENTIVE COVER BY KELLEY JONES | COLORS BY MICHELLE MADSEN

BATMAN
THE MAXX
ARKHAM DREAMS